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XIV

DEVIATIONISM

If I climb up into heaven, thou art there;
If I go down to hell, thou art there also.
If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me,
Then shall my night be turned to day.

000 IN Stalinist jargon every word I have quoted here would be termed ideological distortion, deviationism, apoliticality, gross manifestation of bourgeois-nationalism calling for immediate correction by means of a radical ideological-creative reorientation. Babur would not have liked it, but that is how they talk; indeed, each phrase comes straight from the current press. We have seen how in the earlier days the Soviets resolved the contradiction between their national professions and their real objectives by evoking the rights of the proletariat as a higher force which must overcome the right of national self-determination. In effect, although they did not then so formulate it, their case at that time was that the loss of a nation's right to independence is no doubt an evil, but it is a lesser evil than the sacrifice of the rights of the workers. (Note that the fact that in Central Asia all the 'workers' were then Russian is immaterial to the doctrine as a first principle.) Since, as they say, continued independence would have involved the latter, the loss of independence, regrettable in theory, must follow. But in the first years, as the Kremlin saw it, it was expedient to accord lip-service to an abstract nationalism so far as to encourage a local literature and a press which should play up Central Asian resistance to the Tsarist conquest. At the time this could do no harm; it diverted national patriotisms to a past age, and it drew a possibly useful distinction between the Bolsheviks and the outmoded Russian Empire to which they had suc-

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ceeded. National tradition therefore was lauded, national epics were unearthed and reduced to writing, and there was a period of studious academic research into the national achievements of the various parts of Turkistan. These early years were indeed in many respects favourable to the work of profound Russian scholars such as Barthold and Samoylovich. The temporary relaxation also served to encourage the emergence of a native intelligentsia ambitious to combine pride in their national past with the outlook of a Communist on the contemporary world. It was a fool's paradise.

In those early years this encouragement of what may be called a cultural nationalism was expressed by the now outdated 'School of Pokrovsky'. Pokrovsky was a well-known Russian historian who lived from 1868 to 1932, so flourishing in both the Tsarist and the Soviet periods. Once esteemed by the Soviets as an evangelist, he is now discredited, and with him the edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*[1] which borrowed his learning and announced his gospel. His historical theory was the simple one of regarding the annexation of any non-Russian territory by Tsarist Russia as an absolute evil, resistance to which on the part of a national-liberation movement was a progressive and even a revolutionary act. Pokrovsky in fact was the mouthpiece of the apparent liberalism which prompted the Declaration of November 1917 on the right of all nations to independence, and incidentally was useful for export. It was not long before this school of thought was found too productive of national pride. After some preliminary outpost actions of a probing nature, the Pokrovsky theory met with definite official attack in a Decree dated 27th August 1937, issued by the jury of the Government Commission for the Best Textbook on the History of the USSR.[2] This Decree assailed Pokrovsky as the slave of a defective anti-Marxist convention, the author of a heresy which has become anathema. In the place of his theory it propounded a new first principle known as the Conception of the Lesser Evil, now an immaculate doctrine in the Soviet Creed.

[1] Bib. III, 10. See Vol. 45, Column 856.

[2] Bib. II, 11.

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626 The dogma of the Lesser Evil is briefly this. Oppressive though the Tsarist régime may have been, it was less evil and oppressive than the alternative then open to non-Russian nationalities, namely, annexation by Turkey. (At this time the case of Armenia was chiefly in point.) And oppressive and evil though the Tsarist capitalism may have been, it led the annexed peoples away from Feudalism through Capitalism along the only road to Socialism, and was therefore a lesser evil than a continued independence. Thus this dogma was an extension backwards into Tsarist history of the sort of reasoning from first principles which enabled the Soviets by means of the Doctrine of the Proletariat to justify to their own minds the crushing in their time of the new nationalism that arose in the interregnum period. Both dogmas were shafts aimed at one target, the native nationalists who, if they believed in the dialectic of historical materialism, wished that it should develop within the framework of a national and not a Great Russian consciousness. The difference was that under the newest dogma — that of the Lesser Evil — it was no longer even respectable for a 'Colonial' nationalist to take pride in the prowess of his people even against the Tsarist conqueror. Great Russia in both her incarnations was henceforward to be regarded as unassailable, above criticism, the instrument by which the ultimate reality was inevitably to prevail.

The ground was prepared for the propagation of this doctrine in 1937, before World War II, at about the period of the greatest intensity of the purges. But other preoccupations, with the War itself, prevented active steps being taken for its enforcement until the post-War period. From 1945 onwards enforcement has taken the form of an all-out campaign against nationalism in any form. Such tendencies are compendiously described as bourgeois-nationalism, feudal survivalism or pan-Islamic pan-Turkic capitalist distortions or deviations, and are detected in every field of thought or cultural endeavour, social, literary and aesthetic. In their most secret thoughts all men, women and children must turn

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to Moscow as their Mecca; language, literature and the arts must follow suit; the praise of past achievement is ruled out; and even an appreciation of the beauties of nature is a sign of unhealth and decadence. Stalin is quoted as having said[1] that the remnants of capitalism in people's consciousness are far more alive over the question of nationality than in any other sphere, since they are able to mask themselves in national costume; hence the need to be ever vigilant against the smallest manifestations of nationalist remnants, in whatever guise they may appear.

The campaign got into full swing with an article in *Pravda*, published on 26th December 1950, and subsequently echoed, in season and out, in all the local press of the five republics. What follows is taken direct from press and platform diatribes against 'bourgeois-nationalism' and is no exaggeration. Sometimes there is a trace of unintended humour, but in general the theme is so reiterative that it produces a conscious reaction of boredom and even, let it be said, a sense of spiritual hunger.

The first move is a direction to historians to hold correct views on the history of their republic in relation to its association with Great Russia. In considering the formation of the Uzbek nation, for instance, the favourable influence of this association, even with Tsarist Russia, must be the main theme. For union under the Tsars brought feudal Central Asia into the system of world capitalism and saved it from the wretched fate of slavery to British imperialism. The Stalinist view is that this union slowly developed a bourgeois nation, out of which was born a socialist nation under the impact of the Communist Party and with the brotherly assistance of the Russian people. But emphasis is needed on the prime condition that the Uzbek, or other, nation must desire to associate its national interests with the vital interests of the USSR as a whole. Above all, it is to be realized that all progressive thought, social and economic, was formed under the beneficent influence of Russian culture, and owes nothing to Western Europe. The only impact of the latter was the

[1] [see cat. 116, pp. 230-33 Bib. II, 2 -- Anarly 51]

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186 Anglo-American 'intervention' in the 1919–20 period. Even
814 the American intervention, claiming to be economic, could
626 not be dissociated from the political plans of the militarists and revealed the bestial character of the American imperialists, no disinterested benefactors as was Great Russia. Thus historians, philosophers, economists and literary scholars, all alike, must in their works display the influence of the Great Russian people in the formation of social thought in Asia. Their works must be permeated with the Bolshevik Party spirit and give a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the past. At the base of every thought must be the treatises of Stalin on questions such as linguistics. These will give them a correct understanding of the historical process.

538 It follows that resistance to the Russian conquest is no
186 longer to be seen as a splendid, though unsuccessful, enter-
626 prise. Henceforth poetry or prose works extolling as national heroes the men of Turkish stock who had struggled against the establishment of the Russian imperium, must no longer be included in histories or anthologies, or be quoted with approval. Such actions are futile resistance by a lesser breed to an inevitable absorption in a larger whole by dialectical historical process working through the Russian people; that absorption, even if it pre-dated the Revolution, was, as it were, the shadow of what was to come. Those who presume to praise the 'heroes' of the resistance are guilty of ideological distortion, bourgeois-nationalism, patriarchal feudal survivalism, and so on.

This condemnation extends to specific works. The *Kublandi-batir*, for instance, is no longer a paean of national virtue and valour, but low patter, extolling violence and brigandage. It is steeped in the poison of hatred for other peoples, in reactionary Muslim ideology and ideas of pan-Islam. A local savant is taken to task for presuming to assert that this poem is in content near to our own times, having as its basic idea patriotism and the love of the people. Only a bourgeois-nationalist could thus appraise a poem extolling cruelty and brigandage. All views of this kind must be

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expunged from syllabuses and text-books. The various versions of the Uzbek *Alpamish* epic are as bad, and have not been saved by their translation into Russian. They are not people's epics but Khan's epics. When an Uzbek panegyrist praises them as symbols of all that is heroic and noble in the conceptions of the Uzbeks, he slanders the Uzbek working people by ascribing to them the desires and ideals of the Khans. As a folk-lore expert he should correct his views by reference to the teachings of the classics of Marxism/Leninism. Other objectionable poems are the so-called *Korkut Ata* or *Dede Korkut* epics. Certain Turkmen savants have been shameless enough to plagiarize what is in origin an epic of Azerbaijan. But that is not all. The epic itself is an idealization of the feudal system, conceals the class-struggle, and reveals a non-Marxist attitude to the heritage of the past. It is symbolic of the tendency of nationalism to retire within the confines of a national frontier, refusing to see that which binds the workers of all nationalities of the Soviet Union. The task is to strengthen the struggle against the smallest manifestations of bourgeois-nationalism, against glorification of an outdated culture, against every capitalist survival to be met with in the Asiatic parts of the Union. Yet Uzbeks, Kazaks and Turkmens persist in abstract praises of their 'motherlands'. One Turkmen even had the insolence to write a poem 'My Turkmenistan', and another a lyric entitled 'Thou Turkmen'. Both poems merely isolate the Turkmen artificially, representing only themselves as excelling in valour. It is their contribution to the great assemblage of Soviet peoples that must be stressed. No more bards with a religious-nationalistic ideology, praising Khans and priests, can be allowed.

In their place there has grown up an obsequious literature, best represented by the Kazak laureate Jambul (1846–1945). Like Saadi in one respect alone — he was almost a centenarian —, he has given his name, if only for a season, to the old town of Aulie Ata, near Chimkent. He is the author of poems extolling the Soviet high-priests and the banners of the Red

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186 538 626 Army, which he sees as pointing the way into a world where man can at last realize his destiny. Not for him the old, unhappy, far-off things.

In Jambul's company this ideological war is then carried on to the ground of individual figures in history, and Kine Sari Khan the son of Kasim, the Kazak leader, comes in for special castigation. Historians are taken to task for publicizing in their works the reactionary-monarchist movement of 'K. Kasymov, the robber Khan'. Kine Sari was a reactionary and no defender of the people. Such defects can only be due to neglect of Bolshevik criticism in the literary circles of Kazakistan. Historians and students alike must turn over a new leaf and cease to idealize brigands such as Kine Sari, Abilay and Nauruzbai. Artists and writers do not seem to realize the immense political changes which have taken place as a result of the carrying-out of the Lenin/Stalin national policy, and frequently take delight in an old and outworn past. They must not describe backward individuals as typical representatives of contemporary Soviet life. They must forswear literature of a formalist and cosmopolitan colour; that way lies pan-Turkism, pan-Iranism and pan-Islamism.

186 533 626 Music and the arts do not escape. In Kazakistan musical science is backward and on the wrong lines. The national handbook of music is full of gross errors and idealizes a feudal past, regretting lost freedom. This is bourgeois-nationalism at its worst. Kazak musicians even dare to refer all musical achievement in the republic to the pre-revolutionary period, and to express such views publicly. In Uzbekistan the development of musical culture is far behind the economic, political and cultural growth of the republic — note the order — and does not meet the demands prescribed by the Party to the musical art, as a powerful means of Communist education of the workers. The minds of sculptors are low; they do not deal with the heroic labour of the people in the production of oil and cotton. One artist presumed to say his pictures would be appreciated in ten years' time: an anticipation of the future is as bad as a delight in the past, for it

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is the duty of Soviet man to glory in the achievements of contemporary life.

There is some unconscious humour. There is the outrageous instance of a worker who, though a member of an anti-God league, was found with his Comsomol ticket in one pocket and his religious charm in the other. Too few, we are told, are worried by the fact that there are not enough girls in Comsomols; a massed attack must be made on the girls in the collective farms and an ideological-creative spirit must be displayed by the youth. The Deputy Chairman has even been seen going to the cinema, while his wife, suppressed by his bourgeois-nationalist outlook, remains at home to mind the children. Stalin wants no more decadent verses with descriptions of heroes and their horses and cattle, no more delight in the beauties of nature, no more sob-stuff about roses, nightingales and lovely maidens — and certainly not erotic poetry —, no more pictures of aged greybeards who close their eyes to pray and waste time on the job. All these are foreign to the aesthetic tastes of the Soviet people. The heroic labour of miners, metal-workers, cotton-growers and engineers — these are the true themes for contemporary literature and the arts. And, chiefly, let all remember their big Russian brother, without thought to spare for a separate world and a tradition dead and gone.

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This picture is not overpainted; it can be seen in its full colours by any casual visitor to the Stalinist public gallery. It is not imaginary to suppose that this unrelenting effort is prompted by a certain unease. Here in Central Asia is an exposed flank, the source of raw materials vital to the survival of the Empire, the home of peoples whose memories of their own civilization make them probably the least assimilable of all elements in the Union. At any cost then, in this quarter above all, it is necessary to suppress every tendency towards a separate national consciousness. The question to be asked is this — how far has this unceasing stream of exhortation and

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771 of the Basmachis that they submit to the Soviets. The Basmachi Achil Beg, addressing them, said: 'Let us leave the Bolsheviks on one side for the moment, and also those who speak for them. Come, tell me, on your conscience, whether God will be pleased by your attitude or no?' Said the priests, 'Sir, you know that better than we do.' Whereupon Achil Beg cried with a loud voice, 'You fools! If it is I that know God's will, why preach you in the name of God? Have you no shame to come to us today preaching for the Russians? I would kill you all, but that you are old and foolish and soon will die. Go, and God's curse be with you!' And the Basmachis applauded.

The conclusion is that, under Bolshevist pressure, religious institutions have for ever lost their old meaning and force in Turkistan, partly because the priesthood failed to stand to their brief, but more because religious endowments had been seized and the clergy's authority undermined. 'Yet Islam, cleansed of its theocratic accretions, lives as a spiritual possession in the hearts of the people. Unlike the Orthodox Church of Russia, it does not meet the Godlessness of Communism in an opportune spirit, but is becoming more and more unified with the traditions in our inmost hearts. It is the time of the peoples' clergy.' In fact, Islam has become the spiritual core of the nationalist political creed.

771 Current evidence from Russian sources goes to support
● 626 the conclusion. The contemporary press harps on the defects of Islam, the prejudices of the clergy and the identification of Muslim ideas with a feudal patriarchal framework. Other themes constantly expressed are indignation over loss of time due to religious observances or prayer; persistence of religious influences even among Party members, preference for the Koran over medical attention or drugs; even the stupid story of the Comsomol member with his charm.

The spear-head of the Soviet drive against the faith of Muhammad is supposed to be the Comsomol organizations. The secretary of the Central Committee of the Kazak Com-

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munist Party, Shayakhmetov,[1] went on the air just before Christmas 1951, with a direction to the Comsomols in Kazakistan to take an active part in the struggle against religious behaviour or feudal survivals, and to unmask the *advances* made by people of that way of thought. Whenever work on these lines slackened, he said, there emerged insubordination among individual Comsomols, bourgeois-nationalistic tendencies, and, worst of all, religion among the youth. Not for the first time those who worship Divus Augustus have found that there is no challenge to a living faith which goes without its response. Deviationism will remain for the Soviets an ever-present problem.

For the spiritual inheritance of a people, or group of peoples, is not identifiable only with the direct inspirations of a revealed religion. There is a certain afflatus of the Turkish spirit which seems to make the Turk, Western or Eastern, conscious of impulses which in his own estimation move him apart from other men. These have enabled him in the course of time to impress his personality, and even his language, on many who were not Turks, while he preserved his identity proudly for himself. That pride has lasted to this day, and the Turk, whose spirit has breathed over Persian and Mongol, Anatolian and Byzantine, Bashkurd and Kisghiz, remains simply and invincibly himself, curiously unsullied by the more complex influences around him. Many have been turcized; the Turk remains — a prince of deviationists.

It is even a question how far the much-lauded emancipation of women has really weakened the more vital of the Turkish traditions, though it may have transformed them. On the steppe women were never secluded. A vivid nationalism is not seldom nurtured by women, both within and without the home, more feelingly than by fathers or by schoolmen. A greater permeation of society by women may produce a higher feminine velocity, as it were, and in the end recoil on the

[1] It is not easy to recognize in Russian garb the Muslim name Shah Ahmed. Moreover, the habit of using the patronymic results in the world never knowing a man's own name. Although this is in tune with the use of the Turkish termination *-oglu*, it is a break away from Muslim custom.

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to threaten Russian predominance and weaken the links between the central power and each of the five Central Asiatic Republics. The Soviet central Government has, therefore, strongly opposed all federative tendencies. Organizations which originally dealt with Central Asia as a whole, such as the Central Asiatic Bureau of the All-Union Communist Party and the Central Asiatic Economic Council were disbanded in 1934. The Soviet Government alleged that the liquidation of these bodies constituted a recognition of the growing maturity of the various Central Asiatic Soviet Republics. In reality this measure was dictated by the desire of the Soviet Government to eliminate anything which might serve as a lever for the formation of a regional alliance of non-Russians against the centre.*

Even now there is but comparatively little contact between the members of the Central Asiatic cultural élite such as writers, folklorists and historians, despite the existence of many problems which could be satisfactorily solved by mutual co-operation. In the majority of cases, the only kind of co-operation existing between them operates on the all-Union level, i.e. in a wider framework alongside Ukrainians, Russians, Georgians, Armenians, etc. Thus, for instance, no special conferences of Central Asiatic writers and historians are held, a fact which was regretfully admitted by the Uzbek writer Aibek at the Eleventh Plenum of the Soviet Writers' Union.[5]

The lack of co-operation and co-ordination leads to the isolation of the literature and culture of the various Central Asiatic peoples of the U.S.S.R. The artificial process of separating the national histories of the various Central Asiatic peoples from each other has favoured narrow-minded local nationalism and a certain anarchy in the field of history writing. Textbooks produced for Kazakhstan and Kirghizistan and for Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan conflict with each other in a number of cases.

THE RUSSIANS AS 'ELDER BROTHER'

The idea which the Soviet régime wishes permanently to implant in Central Asia is that the links between each of the non-Russian peoples and the Russians should be closer than those of the non-Russian peoples among themselves. Moscow wants the Uzbeks, the Tadzhiks, Kazakhs, Turkmenians and Kirghiz to realize that one and all of these peoples owe a great deal of gratitude to the great Russian brother while they owe hardly anything to each other. Every Soviet official in Central Asia must

* At the time of the disbandment of the Central Asiatic Bureau the total number of organized communists in Uzbekistan (including Karakalpakia), Turkmenistan and Tadzhikistan amounted to 79,150. In Tadzhikistan and Turkmenistan half of the party membership consisted of Europeans, in Karakalpakia as much as 70 per cent. Only in Uzbekistan were 'native' communists in the majority.[4]

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endorse this idea as a token of loyalty to the régime. Even the highest representative of the intellectual life of Soviet Central Asia, the rector of the Central Asiatic University in Tashkent, Sultan Umarov, had to make the following statement: 'The whole Uzbek people, young and old, will remember for all time that it owes its achievements to the party of Lenin and Stalin, to its elder brother, the Russian people, and to the leader and teacher of the nations – the great Stalin'.[6]

Representatives of other Central Asiatic peoples had to express their political creed in almost identical terms. The great pioneer role of the Russians in Central Asia is indeed undeniable, but the slogan of the Russian 'elder brother' implies more than a recognition of this pioneer work, it expresses servility and self-effacement on the part of the peoples who use it, and subordination of the rich history of the Central Asiatic peoples to Russian history which, as far as Central Asia is concerned, began only in the nineteenth century.

A very important aspect of the 'elder brother' theory is that in Central Asia his is not a temporary function which might come to an end at some later date. With the further economic development of Soviet Central Asia the 'elder brother' will become increasingly indispensable, because the Central Asiatic peoples by themselves are unable to reach the target figures fixed for them by Stalin's five-year plans. They are also incapable of producing from their own people the technical and educational *cadres* necessary for the implementation of these plans. This inability is in part due to the failure of Soviet schools to turn out adequate numbers of qualified personnel from amongst the local population. In addition, it is true to say that some of the Central Asiatic peoples are numerically too small to master the tasks assigned to their national republics by the centre even under the most perfect educational system.

The step from illiteracy to literacy, itself won with difficulty, was easy in comparison with the next objective, namely, the training of a native intelligentsia worthy of the name and capable of replacing the Russians in the key positions they now occupy in Central Asiatic economy. Various causes account for this. In the first place, it proved to be extremely difficult to keep the sons and daughters of steppe peoples for years under a rigid school discipline. In many cases the decree on compulsory school attendance remained a dead letter.* Secondly, there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in Soviet Central Asia; the majority

* In the Karakalpak A.S.S.R. of Uzbekistan 24,000 children of school age, presumably the majority of all children in this republic, did not have any education in 1942–3.[7] As late as 1947, according to the admission of the organ of Soviet trade unions, more than 150,000 school children of Uzbekistan did not attend school.[8] In Kirghizistan 25 per cent of school children did not go to school in the rural districts of the republic, while an even larger number had failed to attend schools in the Kirghiz towns at the end of the first term of 1947.[9]